

- *Jesus was a very nice man;*
- *Never said anything to upset anybody;*
- *Always easy to get along with;*
- *Never judgmental;*
- *Never angry;*
- *Always kind;*
- *Always peaceful...*

If that's been your view of Jesus, you're probably feeling a bit conflicted with what we just read... And if Jesus was such a nice, likeable fella, then why were there so many folk who were keen to crucify Him???

You see, Jesus can get very angry. And that's OK, because when Jesus gets angry, His is a righteous anger... It's an anger that He keeps mostly "in-check", and He will do so, until the Day of Judgment. But every now and then, we catch little glimpses of the Righteous anger of God... And on the day Jesus visited the Temple, and saw God's house being used as a market place, that's what happened...

Righto, let's set the scene:

In the other 3 gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke), they only record **one** of the visits that "grown-up Jesus" made to Jerusalem for the Passover – the visit that leads to His crucifixion...

However, the Gospel of Luke **does** tell us that Jesus' parents had a custom of going to the Passover (in Jerusalem) every year. It was on one of these trips (when Jesus was 12), that his

parents lost Him, and they ended up finding Him at the Temple.

Alright, so if Mary and Joseph (and a lot of residents of Nazareth) had a custom of travelling to Jerusalem every year for the Passover, it is highly likely, that grown-up Jesus used to do the same. And so, the Gospel of John records a couple of Passover trips that the other Gospels don't.

So, the incident at the Temple:

Matthew, Mark and Luke all place this right at the end of Jesus' ministry (just before He is crucified). And the Gospel of John, places it right at the beginning. So, which is it?

Well, there's nothing to say that He didn't do it twice... I mean, God doesn't only reprimand once, and let it slide after that...

But whether He did it at the start, or whether he did it at the end, or whether he did it 3 or 4 times, it doesn't matter. What matters, is **why** Jesus did it, and what we can learn from this.

So, let's get into it:

Jesus goes to Jerusalem for the Passover festival. And this is a "big deal". This was a major:

- religious festival;
- social event;

- pilgrimage – to take time to travel as a community, to the religious capital, to celebrate the Goodness of God, together...

But, when Jesus entered the temple:

he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money-changers sitting there. ¹⁵ And making a whip of cords, he drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and oxen. And he poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. ¹⁶ And he told those who sold the pigeons, "Take these things away; do not make my Father's house a house of trade."

Did you notice, when He saw this evil happening, He didn't just:

- lodge a grievance with management;
- shoo them away.

He quickly plaited Himself a whip, and He drove them out of the temple... And He wasn't just driving the animals out of the Temple with the whip. He drove **them** out of the temple, **along with** their sheep and oxen... Alright, the focus is driving the traders out.

He tipped out the tills of the money changers. He up-ended their tables. And he told the pigeon traders to take them (and presumably their cages away)...

Why???

do not make my Father's house a house of trade."

You see, the Temple, was supposed to be a place of worship/prayer...

And of course, one of the requirements of worship, was the various sacrifices. And so, when all of these pilgrims from all over the place, descended on Jerusalem, they couldn't very well bring their own Passover Lamb with them (or their Ox, or their Pigeon for their various sacrifices)... And so, of course they would have to buy them from somewhere,, and how convenient it was, to have stalls set up in the temple.

Even so, why was Jesus so angry?... I'll tell you about something that made me angry.

It was 2009 (17 years ago). We got some really cheap air fares, and so our family had a month-long trip to USA & Canada... I'd never been overseas before, so international travel was new to me.

Anyway, we found out we could use our credit cards over there, and we could withdraw cash from an ATM over there, so we didn't need much cash.

But while we were waiting in the International Departures there was a stall set up (a money-changing kiosk)... And I looked at their exchange rates and noticed "It wasn't the going exchange rate", and that they were making (I can't remember, maybe about 20% on every trade)... And I thought, "that's not a very good deal, but I guess they've gotta make their money somehow, and it will be handy to have a bit of local currency when we land" ...

So, me and one of our sons go up to the kiosk to exchange a bit of currency. I didn't do it for my son, because that's part of the experience, isn't it... But when we both made our exchanges, a large portion of my money had disappeared, and (my memory may be a bit hazy, but the way I remember it, was around half of my son's money had disappeared).

And I thought "How can that be?" And I went back to the counter, and he told me, that not only was the exchange rate discrepancy a big money-earner for them, there was also a not insignificant fee (I can't remember, maybe \$20). That was another 20% of what I got changed, but my son (a young lad), he only had \$50 spending money, so in the fees, he lost about half his money...

And I was so cranky. They didn't have the fee advertised. And what kind of low-life person was he – he could see me and my little boy were together. Why wouldn't he say "BTW, there's a fee on every exchange, so why don't you do it in one transaction so your little boy doesn't have to pay a second fee..."

I was so cranky. In fact, I'm still cranky...

And apparently, that's the sort of thing that was going on in the Temple.

To pay the Temple Tax, you had to use the Temple coins. The local currency wasn't allowed. And there was a significant fee to do the exchange. One of the commentariesⁱ I read, said

the fee to make the exchange, ended up being about a day's wages.

And if you brought your own animal to be sacrificed, you had to pay an inspection fee, to confirm that it was up-to-scratch for the sacrifice. And the dirty, thieving, money grubbing practice, was that if you brought your own sacrifice, it was all but certain to fail "the inspection"...

And the mark-up on the pre-approved sacrificial animals available at the Temple, was enormous... No wonder Jesus was cranky. No wonder He did what He did...

Anyway, what authority did Jesus have to do that??? I mean, you and I know He's the Son of God, but they didn't. And it's a bold move, to challenge something when you have no authority to do so...

Years ago, I visited a church with some extended family. And when I walked in, I saw signs stuck to windows and doors, all the way around the church. You couldn't miss them: Laminated signs saying: "No food or drink allowed on the carpet" ... And the whole church was carpet... And throughout the service, I noticed mums and dads with young children covertly sneaking little snacks to their children "Don't let anyone see" ... And I could see they were on edge "I hope we don't get caught..." ...

Anyway, when the service finished, I walked around that church and pulled down every single laminated sign. And I

asked if someone could point out one of the Elders to me, and I took the signs and handed them to him, and told him why I pulled them down... And I said, "I think I've done you a favour, but if your elders decide at your next meeting, that I was out-of-place, then you'll just have to put them up again" ...

That was a bit presumptuous of me. I had no authority to do what I did. And it was probably disrespectful to do what I did...

And so we can probably understand why Jesus was asked, for something to prove His authority to do such an outlandish thing...

"What sign do you show us for doing these things?"

Alright, so "If you're going to upset the applecart, and if you're going to presume an authority for yourself, to disrupt the way we do things around here, we want to see a sign to back you up / a miracle of some kind, that gives you the right..."

¹⁹ Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."

And the Jews must've laughed at that: "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?"

But of course, He was speaking about His own body, and after Jesus was raised from the dead, His Disciples remembered what He had said...

And V22 says: **and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.**

Alright, so on the surface, we've gotten a message:

1. Don't turn God's house into a market place; and
2. the 2nd part of the message is the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus being foretold, right at the beginning of this Gospel....

But remember, this is the Gospel of John. And the Gospel of John goes much deeper than the surface. He takes us to understanding things of the Spirit...

Now, I'm a little sad, that our English translations don't pick this up, but in the original Greek, there's 3 different words used, to refer to the Temple.

1. ἱερόν (hierō) which refers to the whole Temple complex, and particularly the courts of the Temple.
2. οἶκος (oikon) Which means "House". He calls it "My Father's House". And that's when the Disciples remembered in the Scripture where it says "Zeal for your house will consume me." (Psalm 69)

3. ναὸν (naon) which refers to the sanctuary – the holy part of the Temple, where God dwells...

So, the design of the Temple was like this:

- The inner-sanctum of the Temple, was the “**Most** holy place (the Holy of Holies)”. It was cut off from the next lower level, by a thick curtain. And the High Priest was the only one who was allowed to go through that curtain, and even then, only once a year (the Day of Atonement)...
- Outside of that, was “the Holy Place”. Certain priests were allowed to enter “The Holy Place” at particular times, to perform particular services.
- Outside of that, was the Court of the Priests, and that’s how close the priests were usually allowed to get;
- Outside of that, was the Court of Israel. And that’s how close the Men of Israel were allowed to get;
- Outside of that, was the Court of Women. And that’s how close the Women of Israel were allowed to get.
- And outside of the temple itself, was the Court of the Gentiles (non-Jews).

These were the “God-Fearers” – the Gentiles, who believed in God, but they hadn’t gone through the full initiation ceremonies required to become a fully-fledged

Jew. And they were allowed into the Court of the Gentiles.

Can you see the picture here? Because of the Holiness of God, some were allowed near. Others were not. Of course, that all changed, when Jesus died on the cross, and God tore that curtain in two. But back then, depending on who you were, you were allowed to get this close to God, and no further...

Alright, so let's see how these 3 words for the temple get used:

1. ἱερόν (hierō) the whole Temple complex, (but in this case, it's referring especially the court of the Gentiles.)
2. οἶκον (oikon) Which means "House". He calls it "My Father's House".
3. ναόν (naon) which refers to the sanctuary – the holy part of the Temple, where God dwells...

If you're wanting to sell stuff, you set up your stall in the outer part of the Temple complex, where all of your potential customers can see your wares... And so, it was the court of the Gentiles that had become the market place.

The one place where people from other nations were allowed to pray, had been turned into a crowded, noisy, distracting market place... Possibly 10s of thousands of foreign visitors would make the pilgrimage to Jerusalem, to worship and Pray to God at the Passover, and the only spot that they were

allowed to be, was a noisy market of dirty, thieving, money-grubbing crooks...

That's what made Jesus angry...

And so, Jesus is the One who used the word "House"...

"Take these things away; do not make my Father's house a house of trade."

I suspect that as far as the Jews were concerned, the naos – the more holy part of the Temple where God dwelled, was God's house... and the dirty stinking Gentiles aren't allowed anywhere near it...

But by Jesus referring to the outer courts as "God's House", is a reminder of Isaiah 56, that says:

Isaiah 56:6–8 (ESV)

⁶ "And the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD,

to minister to him, to love the name of the LORD, and to be his servants,

everyone who keeps the Sabbath and does not profane it,

and holds fast my covenant—

⁷ these I will bring to my holy mountain,

and make them joyful in my house of prayer;

their burnt offerings and their sacrifices

will be accepted on my altar;

for my house shall be called a house of prayer

for all peoples.”

⁸ The Lord GOD,
who gathers the outcasts of Israel, declares,
“I will gather yet others to him
besides those already gathered.”

Foreigners weren't meant to be excluded. It was to be a house of prayer, for all nations... Not an emporium – not a market place...

I'll tell you why Jesus was cranky. He's cranky because those who could least afford it, were being charged exorbitant fees to worship God; and because the foreigners weren't only pushed to the outside – the only place they were allowed to worship, had been taken over by crooks...

Righto, so they then ask Jesus for a sign. And here is where Jesus uses the word “Naon” (the inner temple – the holy place where God dwells).

**“Destroy this [inner place of holiness where God dwells],
and in three days I will raise it up.”**

Are you catching the significance of this? There's 2 very significant revelations here:

1.

Firstly, Jesus is the New Temple *Naon* – Jesus is the place of holiness where God dwells... Wow... When we get to John

14, we're going to hear Jesus say it explicitly "If you've seen Me, you've seen the Father"...

Jesus is the place of holiness where God dwells...

2.

And the second really significant revelation, is that the resurrection of Jesus, **is the sign**...

The Jews wanted to know,

- "What's the sign"?
- what's the sign of your authority?
- Why should we be listening to You?
- Why should we believe in You???

The resurrection of Jesus, is the sign...

He wasn't talking about a stone building. He was talking about His own death.

This temple – **this** Holy Place of God's Dwelling, will be destroyed. No. More than that. In the Greek, the words are all a little bit different, depending on who is referred to. And the verb here "Destroy", is in the second person; plural...

If it was in the singular, it could mean "I"; "you"; or "him". Because it's in the plural, it means "we"; "you lot"; or "them".

If it's in the first person, it means "We";

If it's in the 3rd person, it means "They";

But because it's in the 2nd person, it means "You (plural)" – you lot...

So, what Jesus is saying is:

This is the sign:

"[You lot] **Destroy this** [inner place of holiness where God dwells], **and in three days I will raise it up.**"

And that's exactly how it happened... The Jews had God's Son, put to death. His physical life – His body, was destroyed on the cross. And in 3 days, Jesus was raised by the Power of God...

That's the sign.

And this sets the scene for the final paragraph of today's reading...

V23 says:

²³ Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he was doing.

And that gives us the impression: "Wow, we're finally getting somewhere"... Jesus is there at this special Passover Feast; Jesus is there, doing His signs and wonders and miracles.... And many believed in His Name because of the signs that He was doing... Yayyyyyyy!!!!!!

And you know what: Some people today get all fixated on the Signs and Wonders, and if we can just get a few miracles to happen, then people are going to believe...

And while V23 starts us thinking “Yayyyy!!!!”, V24 pulls the rug right out from under it, as we realise that there is something very deficient about this kind of belief...

24 But Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them

Why? Because Jesus knows stuff; He knows people; He knows what's deep inside...

- *When a person applies for a job, you provide a reference from a previous employer, so they know whether you're worth employing or not.*
- *When you join a sporting club, you usually have to provide character references, to know whether they're a suitable person to have in a club.*

Jesus doesn't need references. He knows what's in the hidden depths of the heart...

And Jesus knew, that not everyone, but most of those who believed in Him because of His signs and wonders, would not stick by Him...

And that's why to become a Christian, isn't about believing that Jesus has:

- healed a sick person; or
- walked on water; or

- turned water into wine.

To become a Christian, is to believe that Jesus is raised from the dead, and to surrender to Him – to believe **in** Him... And we'll talk more about that as we get into chapter 3 (being born again).

But I want to conclude today, with a word about the Naon (Naos) – the Holy Dwelling place of God today...

If Jesus became the new Naos – the new Holy Dwelling place of God (on Earth), Where does God dwell today???

And so, I want to take us to 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 (ESV)

¹⁹ Or do you not know that your body is a temple [naos – a holy dwelling place] of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own,
²⁰ for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

When Jesus died on the cross, that thick curtain separating humans from God, was torn from top to bottom...

When we:

- believe that Jesus is raised from the dead; and
- receive Him as Lord;
- repent of sin;
- die to self; and
- come alive to Him,

- He takes our sin away.

- We become pure.
- We become the new Naos – the Holy Dwelling Place of God

The Holy Spirit of God moves in to dwell in us.

And 1 Corinthians 6 points out, our bodies are the temple of God. We are not our own. We were bought at a price (the blood of Jesus). **So glorify God in your body.**

I wonder what Jesus would want to make a whip and drive out of me. I wonder what tables He would want to overturn in your life and mine... We are to be a house of prayer; vessels of worship of God.

Let's pray:

Lord Jesus Christ,

We praise You for Your greatest sign –

Being raised to life.

Please forgive us for the times when we have gone looking for other signs and other wonders.

By Your resurrection,

Your disciples believed in You,

and so do we.

Lord, we thank You,
that we are not excluded/on the outside.
We thank You that You now dwell
in the hearts of the saints –
Your Holy ones.

And Lord,
we pray that by Your Holy Spirit,
You would convict us of sin, and
lead us to repentance.

And we do this now.

Lord, we confess to You,
the wickedness within.
The tables You would upend in our lives.

We have used our bodies (Your temple)
for worldly pleasures,
and to satisfy worldly desires.

Forgive us, Lord.

And Lord, forgive us
for when we have made it difficult
for outsiders to come to You.

May this church be a house of prayer
for all nations.

And I'm not just talking about this building,
we are praying for we (Your people)
(Your church).

May we be Your House of Prayer
For all nations,

in Jesus' Name,
Amen.

ⁱ Barclay William, The Daily Study Bible, 1975